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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

later: Mr. KOULYK (Vice-Chairman) (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 126: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/45/541 and 548; A/C.5/45/3, 10 and Corr.1, A/C.5/45/11, 12, 18 and 19)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, in accordance with the usual procedure, the Committee would hear a staff representative.

2. Mr. RAMADAN (Egypt) said he wished to reaffirm the importance his delegation attached to personnel questions and to the working conditions of the entire United Nations staff, particularly within the present context. However, at the preceding meeting, the staff representative had made unfounded accusations against some Member States, which was unacceptable. It was to be hoped that such incidents would not be repeated at the current meeting and that the staff representative would confine his intervention to relations between the United Nations and its staff.

3. Mr. FLANDERS (Chairman of the Staff Council) said he was speaking on behalf of the staff representatives at all duty stations, who had approved the report issued with the symbol A/C.5/45/19, which contained the views of the representatives of the Secretariat staff. In approaching the various questions which concerned them, staff members did not act solely in their own interest but also out of a concern to make the Organization an instrument which contributed more effectively to peace and development in the world. Since that objective could be reached only through a constructive dialogue among the Member States, the Administration and the staff, it was to be hoped that staff representatives would be included in informal consultations held on personnel questions and ICSC issues.

4. The security and independence of the international staff remained a critical problem as in other years since no truly effective measures had been taken to put an end to the violations of the rights of staff members, as shown by the list of staff who had been killed or were currently under detention, which was included in document A/C.5/45/19. The large number of staff members imprisoned in the Middle East was a reminder of the scant attention paid by the States of that area to the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on that issue. In that regard, the staff representatives urged the adoption in 1990 of a much more forceful text which, in line with the action proposed by ACC, would call upon the States concerned to put an end to violations of the rights of United Nations staff members on the understanding that, in countries which did not comply, all United Nations activities and programmes other than those of a purely humanitarian nature, would be suspended.

5. The question of seconded staff and the position taken by the Administration in that connection constituted another source of concern. The issue was not secondment per se, which was a mechanism adopted by quite a few countries as the exclusive means of appointment of their nationals under a system of rotation which had ruled out the possibility of their being given career appointments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 37/126. The Secretariat should be free to offer an

individual whatever contractual arrangements it wished on the basis of his performance and merit and the needs of the Organization rather than on that of the specific interests of a Government. Frequent rotation of seconded staff members also put the Organization to considerable expense relating to their recruitment and repatriation. The problem would not be solved by increasing the ratio of fixed-term appointments to career appointments; quite the contrary. Nor would the answer be found in the Administration's proposals contained in document A/C.5/45/12, which represented an attempt to whitewash existing practices.

6. In Judgement 482, the Administrative Tribunal had made important observations regarding secondment procedures, finding that an exchange of correspondence or the notation of a secondment on a letter of appointment was not enough to create a valid secondment. The Administration proposed, however, to amend the Staff Regulations to provide that secondment would be confirmed by such a notation on a letter of appointment. That proposal was not at all in keeping with the Tribunal's Judgement. To acknowledge, as the Administration did, that some "seconded" staff members should be entitled to consideration for career appointment after five years of satisfactory service did not solve the problem of staff with fewer years of service or of staff who might enter on duty under the new procedure envisaged in the Staff Regulations. By the same token, if the system of fixed-term appointment and secondment was not changed, most "seconded" staff would remain in an unfavourable position vis-à-vis the staff as a whole. Given the clear judgement handed down by the Administrative Tribunal and current political trends, the staff representatives hoped that the Administration would take more radical steps to guarantee that staff members of all nationalities were recruited under the same system and given the same career opportunities within the Organization.

7. It was regrettable that the host country continued to restrict the travel of some United Nations staff members. Thus, staff members of Iraqi nationality had recently been added to the list (on which some 15 nationalities were represented) of those whose freedom of travel was restricted. Nothing could justify such measures, which were in the nature of political sanction, and, as such, might seriously compromise the role and functioning of the United Nations.

8. The Staff Council was gratified at the importance attached in resolution 44/185 to the formulation of a comprehensive career development plan for all staff, which would ensure the application of adequate, equitable and transparent promotion procedures in which merit would be recognized. The design of such a plan would be a long-term undertaking, and the Staff Council dared to hope that the Administration would enter into detailed discussions with staff representatives at all duty stations in order to identify its key components. In the mean time, the Council called for the preservation and full implementation of Staff Rule 104.14, which provided for an annual review for all staff qualified for promotion and the establishment of promotion registers for all categories of staff but had not been applied during the period of the retrenchment exercise.

9. The new attitude of openness and dialogue reflected in the intervention of the Assistant Secretary-General for human resources management was encouraging as were

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(Mr. Flanders)

several of the proposals he had made concerning career development and promotion. Conversely, other suggestions, such as those relating to promotion on merit, which could easily be misunderstood and more easily misapplied, called for further discussion.

10. It was obvious that more resources should be devoted to staff training. So far, priority had been given to the financing of language training. The time had come to organize training and retraining programmes, which were indispensable even for fully qualified staff because of the very rapid progress being made in professional knowledge.

11. The staff at large had year after year returned to the idea of a unified personnel structure that would eliminate the current division into two categories, which was a source of permanent friction and dissatisfaction. Such a measure had been adopted by the World Bank a few years previously and had had a very positive effect on personnel management and staff morale. The introduction of a single international civil service category with the same emoluments and benefits was not only feasible but would contribute significantly to increasing the dynamism and effectiveness of the staff. The staff representatives therefore urged the Secretary-General and ICSC to study that option seriously.

12. There was no reason to applaud the progress achieved in the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. Except at the entry level, the number of women, particularly at the higher levels, was actually lower than in previous years. Even extending some women beyond the age of retirement had not measurably improved the situation, but it had kept the total closer to the 30 per cent target. A systematic campaign to recruit women must be conducted, if 50 per cent of posts at all levels were eventually to be occupied by women. It could not be left to Member States to propose women candidates. There was a tendency to forget that women accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the General Service category at Headquarters and at other duty stations. They represented an important source of recruits for the Professional category, provided, of course, that opportunities for advancement, training and upgrading of skills were available. It would be useful for the Administration to discuss with the staff how that potential could be utilized in a way that would be fair to all staff while advancing the interests of women.

13. The administration of justice was one of the cornerstones of personnel administration. Effective and relatively speedy appeals procedures offered an indispensable counterweight to administrative decisions. Informal dispute settlement procedures should be strengthened wherever possible. The Administration had proposed in document A/C.5/45/11 to set up departmental conciliation panels to replace the Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances. For the time being, however, the latter body should be strengthened in order to give it the means to perform its tasks more efficiently while waiting to see how departmental panels operated. In any case, the Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances had been established by a decision of the General Assembly and could be abolished only with its agreement.

(Mr. Flanders)

14. Lastly, in the matter of staff-management relations, it should be recalled that they were governed by chapter VIII of the Staff Rules and Regulations, which stipulated that the bodies representing the staff were entitled to make proposals to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General was, or course, free to accept or reject such proposals and there was no question of interfering with his authority. Such a process of consultation, however, was somewhat unwieldy and the establishment of a system of negotiation as proposed by the staff representatives in their report, would undoubtedly help to make it more effective.

15. Mr. WILENSKI (Australia), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Canada and New Zealand, said it was time to take a fresh look at personnel issues. It was time to ensure that the United Nations Secretariat must be made a leader, rather than a laggard on issues relating to personnel management in order to ensure that it would be able to rise to the challenges that lay ahead. For many years, the same factors that had limited the role of the United Nations had also reduced the effectiveness of the Secretariat. No Secretary-General could pursue a personnel policy worthy of the name if he could not be certain of the loyalty of all staff members and if he had to contend with the interference of Member States. The Secretariat must now restructure itself and reform those personnel management methods in order to make maximum use of its potential and play an appropriate role in a revitalized United Nations. That role would be, firstly, to carry out with a high degree of competence the broad range of activities, both in the peace and security areas and in other areas, that the United Nations was, or would be, called upon to perform. Beyond that, however, the Secretariat must also start to provide the necessary intellectual leadership to carry the United Nations forward into the new era. That meant replacing the flood of often indigestible and repetitive United Nations prose with genuinely incisive and stimulating thinking that would guide the work of delegations in the various Committees while supporting the work of the Secretary-General. There should be no reluctance to stray from the beaten path in order to tackle all the new problems facing the world, which required a multidisciplinary approach and the building of a new multilateralism.

16. For the Secretariat to meet that challenge it must recruit outstanding personnel and make the best use of the personnel's abilities. But Member States must also be ready to subordinate their narrow national interests to the interests of the Organization as a whole and to its long-term effectiveness. There now appeared to be a willingness to agree that there should be no national monopoly on any post at any level. Such an attitude, to the extent that it gave the Secretariat a free hand, would enable the Secretariat to concentrate on chosing the most competent team for the job while ensuring respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

17. It might be thought, for example, that the United Nations would be much better managed if the Secretariat were divided into a small number of functional divisions with clear areas of responsibility and led by deputies to whom the Secretary-General could delegate much of his authority but who, in turn, would be accountable for the implementation of policies. The choice of such deputies might be confirmed by the General Assembly but it should in any case not be subject to

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

pressure from Member States. The system could be headed by a senior management team which, within the framework of decisions made by the Member States, would decide the purposes and priorities of the Secretariat. The formulation of policies and the execution of programmes could then be carried out in accordance with the management principles currently applied elsewhere once the bureaucratic compartmentalization and dysfunctional working practices that were still all too prevalent had been eliminated.

18. In respect of appointments, it was necessary to begin by reviewing the way in which the posts of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General were filled. Of course those appointments must remain the perogative of the Secretary-General, but they should no longer be made on the basis of consideration behind closed doors of a very limited group of candidates known only to those who participated in the selection process. It was essential that vacancies at those levels should be made publicly known. Individuals, including Secretariat staff members, should be able to apply. Governments should be able to propose candidates but not to lobby on their behalf. The Secretary-General might set up a panel to assist him in the task, but in the last analysis he himself would have to decide, with due regard for the way he intended to run the Organization and for the geographical balance of the senior management team.

19. With regard to staff recruitment and promotion procedures in general, considerable progress had been made, as was evidenced by the introduction of a competitive examination for junior professional officers. However, the principle of selection should be extended to the recruitment of all officials. It was essential for the sound working of the Secretariat that officials should be recruited on the widest possible geographical basis, a goal that the Secretary-General had striven to attain, as could be seen from his report (A/45/541), which showed that only 11 Member States were unrepresented and 19 under-represented. But it was also necessary to ensure that the field of candidates for any job was sufficiently wide and that the person finally selected was the most able candidate.

20. With regard to promotion, the only criteria must be those set forth in the familiar words of Article 101 of the Charter. Decisions must, of course, be taken without outside political interference. For the system of advancement to be efficient and credible, a process of staff evaluation based strictly on work performance must be introduced. All vacancies must be publicized, selection criteria must be made known to applicants, and the selection process itself must be clearly understood by all staff. Selection committees, too, must receive appropriate training, and selection techniques must be standardized, which was not yet the case.

21. But if the promotion system was to be effective, officials must also be offered real opportunities for career planning, mobility, diversification of work and career development. That should be the responsibility of each department, not just of the Office of Human Resources Management. In that connection, his delegation was extremely pleased to see the reference, in the statement by the

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, to the need for a qualitatively different occupational training programme. Management training should be an essential part of that programme. However, since good intentions in the training area were often not translated into deeds, future reports on personnel questions must include a detailed account of the specific measures taken in that field.

22. Reductions in staff had of course limited promotion opportunities in the Secretariat. Accordingly, it hardly seemed desirable to expand the system for promotion on grounds of merit, which should be applied only to the lowest grades. On the other hand, it might be possible to consider the solution that had been adopted in certain other organizations, of offering financial incentives to staff who were no longer performing fully in accordance with the Organization's needs, in order to encourage them to leave. A special fund might be set up for that purpose.

23. In conclusion, he announced that, in view of the importance of the issue, his delegation intended to speak on the question of the status of women in the Secretariat on a later occasion.

AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/226, A/45/370 and A/45/617)

24. Mr. PANDAY (Nepal), commenting on the analytical report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/45/226), said that the Economic and Social Council had not yet taken a decision on the question of holding a single session each year, and that the number of subsidiary bodies of the Council which had decided to biennialize their sessions had scarcely increased. Furthermore, the Conference-Servicing utilization factor, which had reached the level of 70 per cent, remained well below the standard which had been set. His delegation hoped that the Department of Conference Services would propose practical ways of improving the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of those services, and that the Committee on Conferences would come up with a refined methodology, to take account of information on the holding of informal meetings, and of time lost, in calculating the utilization factor. On the other hand, his delegation was encouraged by the results obtained with regard to implementation of the recommendations that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective headquarters, that construction work should be undertaken only when sufficient resources were available to complete them, and that the number of claims for delegation travel should be reduced. Also encouraging were the measures adopted by a number of bodies, such as UNCTAD, ECE and ECLAC, to streamline their structures; other bodies should follow their example.

25. With regard to co-ordination, ACC should substantially modify the format and content of its annual overview report, in accordance with the recommendations of CPC, in order to rationalize the meetings of its subsidiary bodies and substantially reduce their cost. Co-ordination of operational activities for development, both within the United Nations system and at the national level, could

(Mr. Panday, Nepal)

not fail to be strengthened by the reaffirmation of the central funding and co-ordinating role of UNDP. His delegation noted with satisfaction that a number of organizations with country and subregional offices had endorsed the principle of common premises and shared facilities, subject to the practical constraints referred to by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. Greater efforts should also be made to harmonize budgeting practices among the bodies of the United Nations system.

26. In view of the delay in restructuring the economic and social sectors, it was important that decisions should be taken rapidly at the intergovernmental level so as to enable the Secretary-General fully to implement recommendation 14 of the Group of 18. As for staff reductions (recommendation 15), the Secretariat had managed to reduce the number of posts without any resultant negative impact on programmes. In that regard, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that a proper balance must be maintained between the number of staff funded from the regular budget and the number funded from other contributions and that any further structural reforms should be aimed at increasing the capacity of the Organization to accomplish its role, not at reducing its staff. Given the importance of peace-keeping operations, special care must be taken to provide the Field Operations Division with the means to carry on normal activities. Member States must support the measures aimed at ensuring the availability of a cadre of core personnel for its operations and at establishing a reserve stock of commonly used equipment and stores items.

27. His delegation noted with satisfaction that significant changes had occured, both in terms of organizational structure and in procedures and methods of work, which had resulted in clearer lines of responsibility and better co-ordination. It also welcomed the reduction in staff travel expenses affected by reducing the number of staff sent on mission and by strictly controlling first class travel. The independence of the internal audit function, reaffirmed by a self-evaluation exercise performed by the Division, presupposed that the Division should have the staffing and resources necessary to carry out the auditing work required, particularly in connection with activities away from Headquarters.

28. With regard to the planning and budget procedure, the Organization would benefit greatly from fuller involvement of intergovernmental bodies in the preparation of both the medium-term plan and the programme budget, despite the difficulty, for Member States and the Secretariat, of developing a common language on matters of programming and budgeting. Problems relating to priority setting should also be resolved as early as possible. His delegation hoped that, as in the case of the contingency fund, guidelines for the use and operation of which had been approved, a solution would be found to the comprehensive problem of additional expenditures, including those deriving from inflation and currency fluctuations, and that the solution would be submitted to the General Assembly at its 1991 session. In any case, improvement of the format and methodology of the programme budget and of the outline budget must be viewed as an ongoing and flexible exercise, in order to consolidate the reforms achieved thus far and to be in a position to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

(Mr. Panday, Nepal)

29. The results of the process of enhancing the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, while not entirely in line with the objectives set forth in resolution 41/213, were none the less very encouraging. Furthermore, one could not but welcome the renewed confidence shown in the United Nations by Member States and the close co-operation and mutual support between Member States and the Secretary-General, which had enabled the Fifth Committee to adopt all its resolutions unanimously at the forty-fourth session. The public perception of the United Nations had also improved noticeably. The Secretariat had done its part, and programmes had suffered few adverse effects in consequence; it was now up to Member States to do theirs, by fulfilling their financial obligations in full and on time, to enable the Secretary-General to complete the implementation of Assembly resolution 41/213.

30. Mr. STEIN (United States of America), said that the reduction in international tensions had created a political climate favorable to the revitalization of the United Nations, but that the reform effort also had made a significant contribution to restoring its prominence and credibility in peace-keeping. Member States must ensure that the limited resources available were directed to priority programmes in respect of which the United Nations had a special ability to act. The areas highlighted by the Secretary-General in his analytical report on the reform process (A/45/226) and by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its thirtieth session were a framework within which the General Assembly should take measures at its current session to strengthen further the Organization's ability to deal constructively with such critical global problems as drug trafficking and pollution.

31. In the economic and social sectors, insufficient reform had taken place, at both the intergovernmental and the Secretariat levels. The comprehensive approach adopted by the Special Commission in 1988 had failed to produce the expected results. The rationalization of the agendas and working methods of the many economic and social bodies of the United Nations must be addressed with a view to developing a decision-making process more oriented towards practical solutions. The structures and methods established over the past forty-five years must be swept away. The restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors should not depend on progress made at the intergovernmental level. His delegation hoped that, in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly on that topic, the Secretary-General would propose the significant changes required, because the existing Secretariat offices and departments, and many of the programmes they were implementing, were clearly ill-suited to the future tasks of the Organization.

32. The resolutions of the General Assembly and the actions taken by the Secretary-General in implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18 concerning co-ordination, while significant, were only the initial steps of a multi-year effort towards the goal of achieving system-wide co-operation in planning, budgeting and implementation. His delegation was ready to work with other delegations in order to build on the accomplishments of the forty-fourth session and to develop the practical measures needed to strengthen co-ordination functions. Regarding evaluation, the existing mechanisms were ineffective because the necessary follow-up measures were seldom taken. Shortcomings in that area,

(Mr. Stein, United States)

which had to do with the maintenance of programmes of marginal interest and the lack of concerted action to simplify administrative procedures, had been amply documented by the auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit, internal evaluation units and ACABQ. It was now up to the Secretariat to exercise leadership and act on the recommendations of those bodies.

33. The Organization must adapt its structures and working methods to the changing needs of the world community, and the General Assembly must continue to give priority to reform efforts. In the area of staff retrenchment and reduction of high-level posts, in particular, the mandated reductions should be implemented fully. While care must, of course, be taken to avoid negative impact on programmes, a further effort must be made to achieve the objectives in recommendation 15 of the Group of 18, as recommended by CPC at its thirtieth session. His delegation had accepted two extensions of the deadline beyond 1989 in meeting the agreed staff reduction goals, and understood the arguments put forward by the Secretary-General in requesting a further extension, but regretted that no further proposals had been made at the current session. It therefore urged the Secretary-General to renew his commitment to identify and abolish unneeded posts, particularly high-level posts. Elimination of one Assistant Secretary-General post had been proposed; that left three more posts to be eliminated in order to meet the agreed goal, which in his delegation's opinion, was not impossible to achieve. At its forty-fifth session the General Assembly should approve the elimination of those additional high-level posts while providing the Secretary-General with the necessary flexibility regarding the modalities for implementing the decision.

34. The reform process begun in 1986 must be consolidated and preserved. His delegation therefore proposed that the Secretary-General should submit an annual report, in the context of the programme budget, providing an in-depth analysis of the measures taken by the Secretariat to improve staff efficiency, achieve economies and reorient programmes to meet the needs of Member States. Such a report would provide a clear and concise picture of the steps taken by the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations of the auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit and ACABQ, as well as a detailed description of proposals to complete the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18. That report would also include a section directed to Member States proposing the legislative action required for the further rationalization of programmes and operations.

35. Despite serious financial difficulties, the United Nations had been able to improve its image and capabilities greatly, but heightened public interest brought with it more intense scrutiny of the way in which it conducted its business. Like its Member States, the United Nations was faced with difficult choices, since its resources were limited while needs were growing. It must, however, be able to respond effectively to the many expectations of the international community. Continuing the reform process was one of the best ways to achieve that goal.

36. Mr. Koulyk (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

37. Mr. PANOV (Bulgaria) noted that considerable results had been achieved in the four years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213, but that it would take time for the problem of improving the efficiency of the Organization's administrative and financial functioning to be solved fully. The Secretariat had made commendable efforts to implement most of the recommendations of the Group of 18. The achievements of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council were also considerable, making possible a significant improvement in the work of the Organization in those fields.

38. As it had been issued in April, the analytical report of the Secretary-General (A/45/226) did not reflect all that had been done in that regard. In the opinion of his delegation, reforms did not consist only in reducing unnecessary expenditure, but were also a means of strengthening the role of the United Nations. Tasks must be better distributed among the various bodies of the system, and priorities must be more clearly defined. The role of CPC should be enhanced so that it could guide and monitor the improvement of efficiency in all spheres of the work of the Organization. His delegation attached particular importance to joint meetings of CPC and ACC and believed that full implementation of recommendations 9 to 13 of the Group of 18 and of General Assembly resolution 44/194 would guarantee greater efficiency in the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and would help to avoid duplication.

39. Care should be taken to ensure that financial restrictions had no negative impact on programmes already approved. The prevailing climate of mutual understanding should facilitate the elimination of many practices which resulted in waste (multitudes of nearly identical resolutions, numerous and lengthy communications from Governments issued as official United Nations documents, lengthy conferences and sessions of various bodies, specialized agencies and committees, meetings held at night and at the weekend, etc.).

40. His delegation placed great importance on the full implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of 18. It welcomed the commendable efforts of the Secretariat, which had resulted in an 11.95 per cent reduction of staff. It believed, however, that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be even more firmly applied in the appointment of staff, provided that, the Organization was not prevented from recruiting the highly qualified specialists it needed.

41. Mrs. MOSS (Bahamas) said that concerted action was needed to accelerate change in those sectors in which progress had been inadequate, particularly the economic and social sector, which was of considerable importance since it accounted for over 80 per cent of the resources of the Organization. In the view of her delegation, the difficulties encountered in restructuring the United Nations could be attributed to the failure fully to implement resolution 32/197. She also recommended for consideration and appropriate action the recommendations of CPC on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the subject, particularly in order to ensure the full implementation of paragraph 2 of that resolution. What was required was the full utilization of existing machinery. Nevertheless, it was also necessary to re-examine any firmly entrenched positions which might be impeding necessary reforms.

(Mrs. Moss, Bahamas)

42. Reform was an ongoing process which should be based on results already achieved. Those results should be consolidated. However, the major reduction in the staff of the Secretariat should not have a negative impact on programme delivery.

43. The new procedures instituted in the administrative and financial sectors appeared to be working well, since during the forty-fourth session the Fifth Committee had adopted all its resolutions without a vote. Similar progress should occur in the payment of contributions, so that the Organization's programme delivery would not be jeopardized by a weak financial position. In view of the tensions triggered by recent events and the de facto solidarity uniting all States, they, as well as the Secretariat, had the obligation to provide the United Nations with the means to function effectively.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/45/6, A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/204, A/45/218 and Corr.1, A/45/218/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/45/279 and A/45/617; A/C.5/45/CRP.1)

44. Mr. TANG Guanting (China) commended the Secretary-General for simplifying the structure of the medium-term plan and improving the introduction. The Secretary-General rightly accorded the highest priority to the peace-keeping activities of the Organization. Nevertheless, in view of the widening gap between the North and the South and the impoverishment of an ever-increasing number of people in the developing countries, economic issues also were one of the highest priorities. In view of the importance of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, it would have been useful if the Secretariat had been more explicit in the introduction on how the United Nations would implement the Strategy and what roles the specialized agencies would play. With respect to Africa, his delegation noted with satisfaction that CPC, at its thirtieth session, had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a system-wide plan of action for African economic recovery and development.

45. The role of the United Nations in the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, and long-standing issues such as apartheid, racial discrimination, Palestine, etc., deserved more attention in the introduction to the medium-term plan.

46. With regard to human rights, the text submitted was a improvement over the one which had been before the Committee in 1988. However, his delegation believed that, contrary to what was stated in paragraph 31, the activities of the Organization in that field should be guided not by "recent developments in the political arena", but by the relevant articles of the Charter.

47. While his delegation could go along with paragraph 36 of the introduction, on the fight against drugs, it felt that reference should have been made to the Political Declaration adopted by consensus during the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Tang Guanting, China)

48. In view of the great importance of science and technology for the developing countries, the next medium-term plan should attach greater importance to the need for effective multilateral technical co-operation in that field and should call for the strengthening of the United Nations bodies concerned. Paragraphs 25 and 29 of the introduction should have been more detailed.

49. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline the structure of the plan. It fully shared the view of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of document A/45/617 and had noted with satisfaction that, as indicated by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the simplification did not imply a projected reduction in the volume of activities. With respect to the composition of major programmes, he recalled that his delegation had expressed its views at the twenty-eighth session of CPC and at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, and it reaffirmed that major programme VII, "Human Rights, Fundamental Freedoms and Humanitarian Affairs", should be incorporated into major programme V, "International Co-operation for Social Progress".

50. Mrs. MOSS (Bahamas) welcomed the fact that the medium-term plan had been simplified. She regretted, however, that the problem of priority-setting had not yet been resolved, and welcomed with interest the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in that regard (reviewing the priority designations of subprogrammes when the plan was revised every second year, and the involvement of intergovernmental bodies in the process).

51. Another aspect of the programme planning process whose importance could not be overemphasized was that of evaluation. While all the organizations in the system recognized its value, evaluation still was not practised systematically and the necessary mechanisms did not exist throughout the system. It was important for evaluation indicators to be built into programmes at the time of their formulation. Her delegation supported the views of CPC on that issue. Only through evaluation was it possible judiciously to eliminate those activities which were obsolete and reallocate resources effectively. The distinction must continue to be drawn between self-evaluatiion and in-depth evaluation, while recognizing that both were critical. Her delegation believed that inter-agency co-ordinating mechanisms should be strengthened and therefore welcomed the improvement in the ACC/CPC Joint Meetings. It urged Member States to facilitate the process by displaying consistency in their positions taken in various intergovernmental bodies.

52. It was also essential to maintain complete consistency between the medium-term plan and the programme budgets and to simplify the decision-making process even further. The Main Committees also should be given the opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the plan. When deciding on new activities, Member States should endeavour to agree on activities which might be eliminated. Noting that new activities always should fall within the ongoing plan and programme budget, her delegation welcomed the efforts being made to modify the format and content of the statements of programme budget implications.

(Mrs. Moss, Bahamas)

53. The increasing importance of extrabudgetary funds only complicated the planning process. Since they were designated for specific purposes, they could not be reallocated to meet shifting priorities. Moreover, the activities they supported were governed by rules which were somewhat less strict than those applicable to activities carried out under the regular budget. Nevertheless, the activities carried out by the Organization in a given field should be revealed in their totality, regardless of their funding sources. Moreover, priority programmes, such as the effort to combat drug abuse, deserved adequate funding from the regular budget despite any extrabudgetary funding they might command. Her delegation therefore welcomed the efforts of the Advisory Committee to resolve the question of the impact of extrabudgetary resources on the financing of the United Nations and on the programme planning process.

54. While her delegation regretted that the plan was not more concise, it noted with satisfaction that activities were presented more appropriately, the number of programmes and subprogrammes had been substantially reduced and programme objectives were more focused. More intergovernmental sectoral bodies had made a contribution than in the past. The Secretariat had devoted considerable effort in the introduction to defining the new directions in which the United Nations should move during the 1990s. Those were all factors which strengthened the programme planning process.

55. Because there was no reliable methodology, programme performance assessment still was inadequate. While the Secretary-General's sixth report on programme performance provided a quantitative assessment of outputs produced in relation to outputs planned, such information was limited and should be supplemented by a qualitative assessment. It was necessary to devise a method of classifying outputs which would facilitate agreement on how they were to be funded. In that connection, it undoubtedly would be useful to review the relevance of outputs which had been postponed more than twice. However, efficiency in planning did not necessarily require radical reforms. With the requisite political will, it was sufficient to refine existing machinery.

56. Mr. SANELL (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries presented the views of their delegations on priority-setting in the medium-term plan. The establishment of that order of priority was currently based on the following three criteria: (a) the importance of the objective to Member States; (b) the capacity of the Organization to achieve it; and (c) the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results. The Secretary-General proposed the addition of a fourth criterion, namely that the objective sought should be of such a nature that multilateral action was demonstrably important to its achievement. The Nordic delegations supported that proposal. With regard to the capacity of the Organization to achieve an objective, different interpretations seemed possible. If "capacity" meant the availability of competent personnel and other resources, the relevance of the criterion depended on the time-frame. If Member States considered an objective important and multilateral action was demonstrably important to its achievement, the Organization should acquire the needed capacity. The Nordic delegations, therefore, tended to give less weight to that criterion in the medium-term context than in the short-term perspective.

(Mr. Sanell, Sweden)

57. The Nordic countries agreed with the Secretary-General that priority-setting in the medium-term plan should primarily focus on the subprogrammes, which were the principal link between the medium-term plan and the programme budget. That was also what CPC had recommended at its resumed session in September 1990. Planning meant not only deciding what to do during the plan period, but also creating a state of preparedness for taking rational decisions, if plans did not turn out as expected. By setting clear priorities, it was possible to indicate what activities should be halted if necessary. It was, therefore, essential not only to designate high priorities, but also to define relatively low-priority activities. The mere fact that a subprogramme was included in the medium-term plan was indicative of high priority. Nevertheless, it was essential to set priorities within that group also.

58. The fact that a number of subprogrammes had been assigned high priority and others low priority in the documents submitted by the Secretariat to CPC in May 1990 constituted considerable progress. Further steps could be taken in that direction by classifying all subprogrammes according to one of three groups: high, medium and low priority. The implementation rate in the high-priority group should, in principle, be 100 per cent. For the Secretary-General, peace-making and peace-keeping activities were of the highest priority. The Nordic delegations, for their part, had also expected to see the environment, human rights and drug control accorded the same level of priority.

59. The Nordic countries agreed with the Secretary-General and CPC that there was a need for continued improvement in the methodology for reporting on programme performance. The Organization could not, however, be expected to solve all the problems that few international or national organizations had been able to tackle completely. The main purpose of programme monitoring was to analyse past performance in order to make future improvements in management. Therefore, it was important to report not only what had happened, but also why it had happened. The Secretariat should have provided a better analysis of the reasons for the outcome of different programmes. Two examples were illustrative. One concerned the correlation between performance rates and vacancy rates. Document A/45/218 provided information on those rates by programme budget section. No explanation was given as to how it had been possible to achieve a performance rate of 90 per cent or more in spite of vacancy rates of 20 to 25 per cent.

60. The other example concerned the performance rate in the highest and lowest priority group. The performance rate in the highest priority group was 83 per cent as compared with 60 per cent in the lowest. One would have expected a higher performance rate in the first group. Nevertheless, in spite of those shortcomings, the Nordic countries thought that the report on programme performance contained useful indicators of performance.

61. Lastly, the Nordic delegations noted with satisfaction the great importance that the Secretary-General attached to self-evaluation, particularly in the report on the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/45/204). They were somewhat disappointed, however, that

(Mr. Sanell, Sweden)

self-evaluation had not been completely accepted as a management tool. In the period 1986-1991, less than half of all subprogrammes would be self-evaluated. On the other hand, it was encouraging to note that programme managers who had attempted to conduct self-evaluation studies had recognized the importance of systematically gathering evidence on the relevance and effectiveness of their programmes. The Nordic countries fully agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on that question.

AGENDA ITEM 118: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

Work-load standards for various categories of conference-servicing staff, including clerical and typing staff, and work-load statistics for the various conference services in the 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 bienniums (A/C.5/45/1 and A/45/7/Add.1; A/C.5/45/L.3)

62. Mr. MICHALSKY (United States of America) introduced draft decision A/C.5/45/L.3 paragraph by paragraph. In submitting the draft decision his delegation did not in any way wish to give the impression that the Department of Conference Services was poorly managed. On the contrary, it was one of the most efficient departments in the Secretariat. The draft decision requested the continuation of the re-evaluation of work-load standards, particularly in view of the introduction in the Department of new techniques which might make it possible to improve services while reducing expenses. The efforts made in that regard by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments were commendable and the draft decision was designed only to encourage him to continue them.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the members of the Committee wished to adopt draft decision A/C.5/45/L.3 without a vote.

64. It was so decided.

65. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary), explaining his delegation's position, said that it welcomed the adoption of the draft decision, which constituted a further step in harmonizing the work of the Organization.

66. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) pointed out that the establishment of work-load standards was in keeping with an extremely important objective. In addition to the fact that they might facilitate the dialogue between the Department of Conference Services and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, work-load standards represented a way of enhancing the effectiveness of the conference services of the regional commissions, to which particular importance should be attached. His delegation hoped that, in the report requested of him in paragraph 6 of the draft decision, the Secretary-General would suggest measures to that end. In that connection, technological innovations should also be introduced in the regional commissions; otherwise, the decision that had just been adopted might be invoked to support further post reductions in conference services, which would be most regrettable.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
17th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 30 October 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOULYK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Koulyk (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/45/6, A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/204, A/45/218 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/45/279 and A/45/617; A/C.5/45/CRP.1)

1. Mr. ARMAS (Venezuela) said that he would like to make a few general observations on the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The new medium-term plan, which would be the principal planning instrument of the Organization in the years to come, had been the subject of many consultations between the various technical, sectoral and regional intergovernmental bodies concerned. While it was unfortunate that not all of the proposed programmes had been examined, that consultative procedure none the less represented a step forward. Various delegations had emphasized the need to streamline the plan in order to make its major orientations clearer. For the most part, that streamlining would come as a result of concerted efforts to create an instrument that reconciled the objectives of the Organization and the interests of the Member States. As the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had said, the plan's new structure did not imply a reduction in activities. It showed that it was possible to streamline and to take the views of the Member States into account at the same time.

2. His delegation was convinced that a mechanism for periodically evaluating the plan and its component programmes would make it easier to develop future programme-budget proposals. The plan should be flexible so that additions or changes could be incorporated if the objectives were reached sooner than expected.

3. His delegation believed that the responsibility for priority-setting rested mainly with the Member States. In its opinion, there should be no distinction among the programmes. All programmes were of equal priority, even though some activities, such as the maintenance of international peace and security, obviously required special attention. It was at the subprogramme level that priorities needed to be defined, in accordance with the regulations governing programme planning. In the future, it would be best simply to indicate the subprogrammes to which it had been agreed that priority should be given, without specifying the order of priority. When it came time to implement the plan, those subprogrammes would receive particular attention; that should normally result at the evaluation stage, in a delivery rate of almost 100 per cent. Those priorities should also be reflected in the programme-budget proposals. There was no need for the plan to include an estimate of the human and financial resources required. The place for that information was in the programme-budget proposals.

4. The Organization would not be able to reach the two goals that it had set itself - maintaining peace and eliminating the inequalities between the rich and the poor nations - unless Member States reaffirmed their confidence in it by paying

(Mr. Armas, Venezuela)

their assessments in full and on time, so that it could carry out all the programmes provided for in the plan.

5. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the renewed prestige of the Organization and the new tasks and responsibilities that had been entrusted to it, as well as the prospects for the development of international economic co-operation and the revival of the North-South dialogue made possible by the improvement of the international political climate, conferred considerable importance on the definition of the objectives and strategies of the United Nations in the medium-term plan, which also provided a framework for the development of the programme budgets. The Secretariat had made commendable efforts to streamline the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. As a result, there were fewer major programmes, programmes and subprogrammes, and the plan was less exhaustive. Three new programmes, in addition to the one on African economic recovery and development, had been added at the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. However, before the proposed plan was adopted, his delegation would like to be assured that the streamlining of the medium-term plan had not led to the elimination of any activity called for either in the Charter or in the decisions of the deliberative organs of the United Nations.

6. In drawing up the proposed plan, of the 44 programmes, 28 had been reviewed in consultations with intergovernmental bodies. He wondered to what extent the observations and recommendations of those bodies were reflected in the document submitted to the Fifth Committee. In particular, it would be interesting to know whether, in writing the section on Africa, the Secretariat had taken into account the observations and recommendations of the Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

7. With respect to the major orientations, objectives, strategies and priorities spelled out in the introduction to the medium-term plan, the Secretary-General was right in saying that collective security should encompass economic and social issues as well as the environment and human rights. However, paragraph 3 of the introduction should have stated that the confidence-building measures elaborated in the European regional context did not necessarily apply to other regions in which the political, social and economic situation was very different. That being so, the United Nations should avail itself of every means of action at its disposal to settle regional conflicts, and should strengthen the role of the Security Council and the Secretary-General for that purpose. As for disarmament (paras. 9 to 14 of the introduction), the goal of the United Nations should remain general and complete disarmament, and absolute priority should be given to nuclear disarmament and to a total and general ban on nuclear testing. Also, it would have been appropriate to state that transparency should be promoted in the production as well as the transfer of arms.

8. In the area of economic and social development, the Secretary-General had been correct to emphasize the reinforcement of multilateral co-operation. He had also been right to underscore the need for the international community to focus particular attention on the war against poverty, hunger and disease and on

(Mr. Zahid, Morocco)

upholding human rights and human dignity. In that respect, his delegation hoped that the African continent, which was the most disadvantaged would remain a priority area of intervention. It was unfortunate that issues such as African economic recovery, debt and the environment had not received the same priority in the introduction as the fight against drug abuse.

9. His delegation endorsed the suggestion that the re-establishment and maintenance of international peace and security should be an absolute priority. However, more emphasis should have been placed in the introduction on the elimination of apartheid and on the question of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Middle East was the most explosive region in the world, and the situation in that region should also be considered a matter of top priority.

10. Mr. DENEIKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in order to consolidate the results obtained, they should be subjected to hard-nosed, critical examination. That was especially true of the programme-planning process. That complex, rigid process had become an end in itself and gave rise to voluminous documentation that was not only impossible to analyse in detail but impossible even to read. The medium-term plan, which had initially been designed to improve the efficiency of the Organization, had become an extremely complicated, confusing and costly bureaucratic mechanism. Additional methodological innovations would not improve matters.

11. His delegation had no ready-made solution. It did believe that the Member States should sit down together to explore ways of radically simplifying United Nations planning activities by taking a look at the areas in which the United Nations had achieved concrete results. The introduction to the medium-term plan should play an essential role in that regard by giving an overview of the top-priority fields of action. It should indicate the tasks and general objectives of the Member States and set guidelines for the accomplishment of those objectives.

12. Mr. AWOONOR (Ghana) said that the end of the cold war had ushered in a period of uncertainty. In that context, the Organization could not confine itself to defining objectives, strategies and trends solely on the basis of mandates established by intergovernmental organs. Averting the spectre of war was the raison d'être of the United Nations but, as the entire history of mankind showed, in order to do so, the fundamental rights and dignity of the human person must be respected and equality, justice and development must prevail. The Organization must therefore cease to look only at the symptoms and must tackle the root causes of tension, injustice being the foremost among them.

13. To state that peace-making and peace-keeping activities of the Organization would be of the highest priority could create the impression that certain activities of the Organization had another purpose. It was equally regrettable that a distinction was being made between peace-making and peace-keeping, on the one hand, and the enhancement of the well-being of the peoples of the United Nations, on the other hand, when the fact was that the two goals were inextricably

(Mr. Awoonor, Ghana)

linked. In redefining the orientation of the Organization, a distinction had to be made between activities undertaken in response to an eruption of conflict and those that were directed against the underlying causes of tension, so that the permanent nature of the former would not cause the latter to be neglected. The end of the cold war should therefore make it possible to concentrate fully on the search for lasting peace, in other words, peace founded upon justice. In that connection, his delegation could only regret that in the introduction to the medium-term plan, there was no mention of apartheid, the most virulent form of institutionalized injustice. While apartheid was indeed included in programme 6 of Major programme I, it was not a symptom, but rather a cause, of instability, which should command primary attention. The same held true for non-adherence to the principle of self-determination and the lot of the inhabitants of the colonial territories.

14. Peace-making and peace-keeping activities would serve little purpose unless the question of a global international economic democracy were addressed and unless steps were taken to tackle the international economic order which was suffocating the majority of peoples under debt, unfair terms of trade and financial difficulties. Such an unjust economic system could only foment conflict and encourage the rise of totalitarian régimes. His delegation was firmly convinced that the introduction to the medium-term plan must adequately reflect the grave concern of the international community in the face of the critical economic situation in Africa and elsewhere.

15. The Secretary-General had underscored the interdependence of most of the items before the Organization. His delegation believed that there were even linkages between and among all agenda items, and that caution was therefore required in defining priorities. If priorities must be set, in the interest of efficient planning and effective utilization of resources, they should be limited to the subprogramme level.

16. Mr. DINU (Romania) noted with satisfaction that the proposed medium-term plan had been drawn up according to the new planning and budgeting process. It had also been the subject of extensive consultations which had involved intergovernmental bodies, even if, regrettably, they had not dealt with all the proposed programmes. The simplified structure of the new plan was welcome, especially since that simplification did not translate into a reduction in the projected volume of activities. The introduction, a key element in the planning process, offered a balanced and challenging vision of the future course of the work of the Organization. His delegation agreed with the proposed vision and the overall priorities set forth, even though it should be pointed out that Member States should contribute also, including at the stage of further revisions, to ensure the fine tuning of the plan. His delegation was fully prepared to take into account the possible concerns of other delegations regarding, for instance, the economic and social fields.

17. With regard to flaws in the proposed plan, his delegation concurred with many observations and proposals contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on

(Mr. Dinu, Romania)

Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/45/617) but believed that, contrary to what was implied in paragraph 3, the plan could be of great practical use to Member States and the Secretariat once it was implemented, provided that the difficulties connected with the setting of priorities and the estimating of resources were overcome.

18. The reviewing bodies should have formulated more recommendations on priorities. Secretariat units were at times reluctant to submit proposals which might antagonize their partners in the planning process. However, without specific proposals from them, it would be very difficult to agree on priorities. The existing rules and regulations should therefore be adhered to and priority-setting should be primarily focused on the subprogrammes, in order to turn the procedure into a useful management tool, providing a link between the plan and the budgets. That task, however, became difficult to perform with certainty when the proposed plan did not contain estimates of the necessary human or financial resources. In that connection, the Secretariat could furnish the Committee with the information it had given to CPC at its spring session, so that the proposed medium-term plan could be adopted by consensus.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that in order to expedite its work, the Committee could begin its consideration of the major programmes of the proposed medium-term plan without waiting for the conclusion of the general discussion on item 119. He therefore proposed that the Committee, as of its 18th meeting, should begin considering the major programmes one by one in the time remaining at the end of the meetings.

20. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/226, A/45/370 and A/45/617)

21. Mr. YU Mengjia (China) said that his delegation agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) with respect to the analytical report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/45/226). Pointing out that the financial crisis and the increasing demands on the United Nations had made the reform process extremely difficult, he stressed that a sound financial base was a prerequisite for the normal functioning of the United Nations and for the success of the reforms.

22. His delegation agreed that, to the best of its ability, the Organization had fulfilled the mandate assigned to it. His delegation also agreed with the Secretary-General's assessment of the progress achieved with respect to restructuring in the political field, the reduction in posts and the improvement in budgetary procedures. In the current phase, it was vital to consolidate the achievements in those fields so that the United Nations could meet the challenges of the 1990s.

(Mr. Yu Mengjia, China)

23. Progress, however, had been uneven and much remained to be done in certain fields. First of all, the United Nations should play a more important role in the economic and social sectors. Any reforms in that regard must aim at strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council and be in strict conformity with the mandate of that organ. Moreover, the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council must proceed gradually and reflect the common desire of Member States.

24. With regard to the budgetary process, the outline of the programme budget did enable Member States to participate at an earlier stage in the process, but could hardly make a reliable projection of the overall level of resources required for the next biennium since the final level had to be approved by the Assembly at the same time as the budget. The problem required an immediate solution. The rate fixed for the contingency fund must also be subject to timely revision to take account of needs.

25. Despite the importance attached to priority-setting, no feasible methodology had yet been devised. The question, raised both by the Advisory Committee and by CPC, of the impact of extrabudgetary resources on programmes, especially priority programmes, also remained to be settled as a matter of urgency.

26. Although it was too soon to assess the effect of the measures concerning personnel, the Secretary-General had shown commendable realism in deciding not to reduce regular budget posts by 15 per cent, as had been called for in recommendation 15. It was regrettable, however, that he had failed to mention in his report the effect of post reduction on geographical distribution and that he had not drawn the appropriate conclusions from the figures given in paragraph 185 of his report with regard to the percentage of posts at the D-1 level and above held by nationals of developing countries, which showed a slight decline. It was to be hoped that he would take effective measures to redress that situation without delay.

27. Finally, the Secretary-General stated in paragraph 258 of his report that the reform had been carried out without serious negative effects on programmes. He did not give any further details on that point, but, elsewhere, mentioned postponing outputs that could not be produced because the number of vacant posts had been higher than anticipated. In addition, the figures showed a declining trend in overall programme delivery rates since the 1984-1985 biennium. The matter warranted serious attention by the Secretariat and Member States.

28. The considerable resurgence of interest shown in the Organization by Member States was not so much the result of the reform undertaken as a sign of the international community's conviction that the United Nations could play a positive role in world affairs. The Organization could maintain its vitality only by continually improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. His delegation was prepared to join with other delegations in contributing to such an improvement.

29. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that his delegation had carefully studied the reports of CPC and the Advisory Committee and that of the Secretary-General on the

(Mr. Zahid, Morocco)

efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations. It noted that considerable progress had been made despite the financial crisis. The restructuring of the Secretariat had been successfully completed in respect of political affairs, administration and information, and it was to be hoped that the improvement in the international climate would help to revitalize the system in the economic and social sectors.

30. With regard to post reductions, his delegation considered that any further reduction might have a negative impact on programme implementation and the structure of the Secretariat. Noting the contradiction between the Secretary-General's comment that the programmes had, on the whole, been implemented and the fact that the rate of programme implementation had dropped from 82 per cent to 74 per cent since the 1984-1985 biennium, his delegation agreed with CPC that the indices contained in the report of the Secretary-General did not lend themselves easily to an overall assessment of the real impact of recommendation 15 on programmes. It hoped that the activities provided for in the programme budget for the current biennium would not be affected by the implementation of that recommendation.

31. His delegation further stressed the need to display the utmost flexibility in implementing the new budgetary process, given the numerous methodological problems which remained to be solved and, while agreeing on the importance of consensus, pointed out that the decision-making process was still governed by the relevant provisions of the Charter and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

32. If the administrative and financial reform was to have a lasting effect, the United Nations must continually adjust to developments in the international situation and put an end to the financial uncertainties affecting the functioning of the Organization. In order to enable it to discharge its growing responsibilities with regard to peace-keeping and development effectively, all Member States must pay their contributions punctually and in full.

33. Miss SHITAKHA (Kenya) reaffirmed that the purpose of the reform was to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization. That aim could only be attained through a tangible demonstration of political will by all Member States and optimum utilization of financial and human resources. It should be noted, however, that, despite universal and repeated reaffirmations of the crucial role of the Organization, some of the Member States which had been most insistent in their calls for reform had yet to meet their financial obligations. The result was that, at a time when the Organization was called upon to perform many new tasks, it was still threatened by bankruptcy. Moreover, at the same time as the United Nations was being urged to expand its activities in certain fields, demands were still being made for further across-the-board reductions in its resources, without any regard for the difficulties already encountered in some services.

34. Her delegation agreed that the Organization had fulfilled its mandate to the best of its abilities, but it believed that it should now proceed with caution and endeavour to consolidate the results achieved. It could be seen that the

(Miss Shitakha, Kenya)

implementation of recommendation 15 had resulted in a reduction in the rate of programme implementation. The Organization's capacity had been stretched to its maximum limits, it did not have the means to carry out the new tasks entrusted to it and, in order to avoid jeopardizing certain programmes, had to resort to posts funded from extrabudgetary resources. Her delegation was therefore opposed to any further post reductions and fully endorsed the CPC recommendation that the relationship between posts and programmes funded from the regular budget and those funded from extrabudgetary resources required further analysis.

35. Her delegation was disappointed by the poor results achieved regarding the representation of nationals from developing countries in the higher levels, and urged the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts in that regard. In that connection, it regretted that he had not provided more information on the implementation of recommendation 55.

36. With regard to the new budgetary process, while welcoming the willingness of all delegations to reach a consensus, she did not believe that consensus was an absolute necessity and reaffirmed that the decision-making process was governed by the provisions of the Charter and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. No State, when it deemed an issue to be important to itself or to its region, could be prevented from seeking majority decisions. Resolution 41/213 had indeed been adopted on that understanding. Finally, her delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC contained in paragraphs 13 to 25 of its report (A/45/16 (Part I)) and reserved its right to comment on any individual issue that might arise subsequently.

37. Mr. DINU (Romania) said that it emerged from the analytical report of the Secretary-General that the programme of administrative reform initiated in 1986 had been largely implemented. That augured well for the Organization's ability to evolve in an ever-changing world.

38. During the past four years, remarkable progress had been made in improving co-ordination, particularly in the area of operational activities. Resolution 44/211 laid down a number of basic principles in that regard. Much remained to be done, however, to improve co-ordination in other sectors, and his delegation was therefore satisfied with the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the recent joint meetings of CPC and ACC on that issue.

39. The simplification of the organizational structure of the Secretariat had mainly affected the political, administrative and information sectors. The restructuring of the economic and social sectors was still pending. As the chief administrative officer of the Organization, the Secretary-General was undeniably entitled to take certain decisions in that regard without awaiting the restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery; if necessary, he could anticipate such restructuring. The proposed medium-term plan, particularly the approved priorities, could serve as a guide to him in carrying out that task. It went without saying that any decision should be taken in consultation with Member States.

(Mr. Dinu, Romania)

40. As regards the implementation of recommendation 15, he noted that considerable efforts had been made to achieve a 12 per cent reduction in the number of regular budget posts. While agreeing with the Secretary-General that, on the whole, the reductions had not made a negative impact on mandated programmes, his delegation failed to see the connection between the implemented reduction and the Organization's capacity to produce new outputs (para. 79 of document A/45/226). The number of outputs added during the biennium might be an indicator of the Organization's adaptability, but a lower rate of newly added outputs would prove a better level of planning. His delegation did agree that, as stated in paragraph 80 (c), the reduction had stretched the capacity of "some parts" of the Secretariat, a formulation which suggested that there were other parts of the Secretariat whose capacities could be stretched too. That was not, however, a call for further staff reductions; on that point, the Romanian delegation shared the Secretary-General's cautious approach. The staff reductions was not an end in itself, but only one possible option in the general effort to increase the Organization's efficiency. When contemplating any option, it was important to inquire whether it was commensurate with the volume of outputs which the Organization was required to produce.

41. His delegation would revert to the subject of planning and budgeting procedures at a later stage; generally speaking, it considered that the course initiated by resolution 41/213 was the right one. As to the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, the question of priorities still gave rise to some problems, but that was not a setback of procedure; close consultations between delegations and the competent Secretariat departments would help to achieve a smooth transition to the new style.

42. Mr. BAZAN (Chile) said that the end pursued by the United Nations was not merely peace but peace with justice. The Organization had to be given the means to accomplish that task, which meant that any reform should be so designed as to strengthen its efficiency and enable it to perform a greater number of activities with the limited resources at its disposal. With that end in view, it was essential to keep a close watch on the operation of newly established bodies and to make sure that existing ones were still of use. That had been the objective of the work of the Group of 18, and due vigilance was called for in all the areas to which the Group's report drew attention. However, the purpose of the exercise would not be served by instilling a sense of permanent instability in the Organization's officials.

43. So far as the implementation of the Group's recommendations was concerned, considerable progress had been achieved with regard to recommendations 1 to 4. The reduction in the number of plenaries held by the General Assembly despite the increased number of agenda items suggested that conference services had been better utilized. On the other hand, the reasons for the drop in the rate of delivery of programmed outputs needed to be closely looked into. It was to be hoped that the decline was not an indirect consequence of the reform process.

(Mr. Bazan, Chile)

44. With regard to recommendation 5 relating to the construction and maintenance of conference facilities, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that necessary work should be carried out in good time so as to prevent facilities falling into disrepair. Seen from that angle, a sound maintenance programme was not a superfluous item of expenditure because it led to savings in the long run.

45. With regard to staff reductions, the analytical report of the Secretary-General did not make it clear whether or not a net reduction had been achieved; while the number of regular budget posts had diminished, that of posts funded by extrabudgetary resources had risen. The figures supplied might give rise to confusion, and the Secretariat should furnish more precise information on developments with regard to all posts, including those funded by extrabudgetary resources, since the beginning of the reform.

46. Three years after the reforms had begun to be introduced, the Organization was no longer the same. It had achieved greater flexibility and had proved capable of adapting to developments in the world situation while causing the attitudes of Member States towards it to change. That its efficiency had been strengthened was indisputable. What was needed today was to consolidate those gains so that the United Nations might continue to play a leading role on the international scene.

47. Mr. MONTEJO (Philippines) welcomed the steps taken by the Secretary-General since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213 by introducing reforms in a number of fields. In its recommendation 15, the Group of 18 had called for a reduction by 15 per cent of regular budget posts; a reduction of 12 per cent having now been achieved, his delegation would be interested to know the timetable for achieving the 3 per cent reduction still outstanding. It was essential to maintain the efficient delivery service of the Department of Conference Services, and his delegation hoped that any further post reduction would not prejudice that Department's very satisfactory performance. Continuity of staff levels and programme continuity were essential to the efficient functioning of the Organization. The fact that, despite difficulties, there had been no negative impact on mandated programmes proved that the creation of posts was not the only means of meeting the growing volume of the Organization's tasks.

48. The administrative efficiency of peace-keeping activities called for priority attention. Special training should be given to staff participating in those operations. In view of recruitment difficulties, the Secretariat might envisage offering some incentives within existing sources. Assistance to disaster-affected countries was another activity in which efficient delivery service depended on the quality and training of staff. It was to be regretted in that connection that the United Nations devoted only 0.46 per cent of its budget to training - a small percentage indeed compared with other agencies. In view of the steadily increasing volume and urgency of the world-wide refugee problem, attention should also be given to the efficiency of the activities of UNHCR.

49. The improved world political climate meant that in the reform process the Secretary-General could now focus his attention on economic and social activities.

(Mr. Montejo, Philippines)

The Economic and Social Council, the intergovernmental body most prominent in those activities, should assert its role by recommending appropriate measures that took into account the requirements of Member States. So far as Secretariat units were concerned, the departments concerned, and in particular the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, should be in the forefront of responsibility. The regional economic commissions should also play a greater role in the economic advancement of countries within their respective regions.

50. With regard to public information, his delegation took the view that all United Nations activities in that field should be placed under the aegis of the Department of Public Information. Such a step was not only desirable for reasons of economy but would also avoid duplication of activities in separate United Nations information offices.

51. As the integration of the medium-term plan, the programme budget and the monitoring and evaluation system recommended by the Group of 18 had not yet been achieved, information on progress achieved in that field might be included in a report to be considered, say, at the same time as the draft programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. In that connection it was to be noted that the trend towards consensus adoption of decisions on budgetary matters should hasten agreement concerning the programme budget's level and contents.

52. With regard to financial and budgetary procedures, the bodies in charge of budgetary control - the Joint Inspection Unit, the Advisory Committee and the Board of Auditors - had submitted comments and recommendations which would help to strengthen the Organization's efficiency in those fields. It was to be hoped that the Secretariat would study those suggestions with care. His delegation also considered that the application of uniform accounting procedures throughout the system would facilitate the consideration of the financial reports of different agencies, while the use of standardized budgeting techniques would be helpful to decisions on budgetary matters. The financial rules and regulations should be more adaptive to the development of the budgetary process.

53. A new era had dawned for the United Nations, but the Organization could not be expected to rise to greater heights if its coffers were bare. In order to fulfil its political mandate and extend its humanitarian and economic assistance throughout the world, it had to enjoy financial stability.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
18th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 31 October 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/226, A/45/370 and A/45/617)

1. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that agenda items 117 and 119 - and even agenda item 126 - were part of a whole and that, by treating each item in isolation, one ran the risk of not achieving the desired goal: a more effective United Nations. Like any Member State, the Organization was expected to undertake an ambitious programme of work and at the same time keep costs within reasonable limits. To that end, the reform of the Organization should do more than just implement the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts (Group of 18) aimed at improving the information systems in the Secretariat, using the medium-term plan to improve system resource allocation, and integrating programme budgets fully into the medium-term plan.

2. Considerable progress had been made in implementing many of the recommendations of the Group of 18, but the process that had been set in motion was not yet complete. In that connection and in connection with the development of the medium-term plan, the Secretariat had stated that it lacked the information necessary to implement the recommendations. Such an admission was a clear indication that high priority should be given to developing appropriate management systems, a point on which the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had already made some interesting suggestions. It would be useful to the Fifth Committee if the Secretariat could keep it up to date on the implementation of the recommendations of those two bodies. More vigorous evaluation would also help to improve programme delivery and would make it much easier to establish realistic priorities. Much remained to be done in the area of co-ordination, both within the Secretariat and among the agencies. The development of common terminology and common reporting systems, as recommended by the JIU and the Board of Auditors, would help the Secretary-General to administer mandated programmes more effectively. With respect to personnel, the Secretariat did not currently appear to be in a position to make the best use of available resources. To rectify that situation, the administrative structure of the Organization should be simplified, and responsibilities should be more clearly defined.

3. According to the Secretary-General, numerous difficulties had been encountered in programming and co-ordination in the economic and social fields. Those difficulties, which might be due in large measure to an unwillingness among Member States to come to grips with some of the issues, should not prevent the Secretariat from trying to improve co-ordination among the divisions of the Secretariat operating programmes in those fields. Improved management practices and administrative structures could be put in place immediately and would enable the Secretariat to be prepared for the day when Member States could agree on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. He did not want what he hoped would be viewed as constructive criticism to detract from the great accomplishment

(Mr. Merifield, Canada)

of the Secretary-General in implementing most of the recommendations of the Group of 18 under adverse and uncertain financial conditions. It would be an error to stop the process now.

4. Far from being an end in itself, improving efficiency should enable the United Nations to achieve the objectives laid down in its Charter, and the medium-term plan should be an essential tool to that end. Despite its imperfections, the plan could assist Member States and the Secretariat in reaching a common understanding of the direction the Organization was taking. In the case of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997, more attention should have been given to trying to present the priorities and orientations more clearly. It was not always easy to make such distinctions between some major programmes, although an effort had been made to identify some priority areas in the proposed budget outline for 1992-1993, but there should have been a clear evaluation of the priorities at the subprogramme level. The delegations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand fully endorsed the proposals of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) aimed at improving the structure of the plan and increasing consultation. They hoped that the Fifth Committee would reflect those proposals in the resolution on programme planning. It would, moreover, be regrettable if the Organization's special responsibility to promote and encourage respect for human rights did not receive priority treatment during the first year of implementation of the medium-term plan. Finally, all the reforms he had mentioned depended on the Organization being on a sound and predictable financial footing. It should not be necessary for the Secretary-General constantly to remind Member States that it was imperative for them to pay their contributions in full and on time.

5. Mr. DJANKLA (Togo), said he was pleased to note that, in the space of three years, the administrative and budgetary reform process had produced significant results: the restructuring of services of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat; the introduction of technological innovations to modernize the Organization's administrative and financial management; the adoption by subsidiary organs of biennial cycles in order to improve efficiency and cut expenditures; the measures taken by the Committee on Conferences to improve the utilization of conference services, for which the utilization factor now exceeded 70 per cent; the reduction in the number of meetings involving additional costs; the application of the principle that bodies should meet at their respective headquarters; the decrease in travel expense reimbursements to Member States; the exercise of restraint by Member States in their requests for the circulation of communications as official documents; and so on. Those results were, however, insufficient and should be expanded.

6. With respect to the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of 18, the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 showed a reduction of 1,365 regular budget-funded posts in comparison with the previous biennium, or a reduction of 11.95 per cent over three years. With regard to that recommendation, however, it should be remembered that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to avoid any negative impact on programmes and on the structure and composition of the Secretariat. It was also necessary to take into account the consequences of

(Mr. Djankla, Togo)

the Organization's increased membership, the end of the cold war and the emergence of a new climate of understanding and co-operation, as well as the adjustments that would have to be made in the economic, social, peace-keeping and disarmament programmes as a result of those upheavals.

7. While the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields established to carry out a study of the intergovernmental machinery in those fields had not been able to submit a report that could be adopted by consensus, its work did have the merit of demonstrating that all the Member States wanted to see the efficiency of the United Nations improved in those fields; that the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council should take into account the legitimate and vital interests of all States and groups of States, while scrupulously respecting the purposes and principles of the Charter; and that that revitalization should be aimed at creating ways of stimulating international economic co-operation, thereby ensuring economic and social progress in the developing countries. His delegation hoped that the special high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council scheduled for 1991 would benefit from those findings.

8. His delegation fully endorsed the statement of the Secretary-General and the view expressed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) that the Organization's peace-keeping activities should be given absolute priority. It also agreed with the other priorities adopted, namely, economic development in the developing countries, the economic recovery and development of Africa, the environment, and the international campaign against drug trafficking.

9. In view of the absolute necessity of putting scientific and technological progress to work to modernize the management of the Organization, special attention should be given to its data collection, processing and transmitting and global network capacities; the periodic evaluation of the results of technological innovations; the training or retraining of the staff concerned in the use of modern management techniques; and the development of a global strategy for the introduction and use of technological innovations in the future. With respect to the United Nations system as a whole, efforts to harmonize budgeting practices among the different organizations, in accordance with recommendation 13 of the Group of 18, should continue, as JIU and ACABQ had recommended.

10. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) regretted that, in his report, the Secretary-General had concentrated more on describing the measures taken to give effect to the recommendations of the Group of 18 than on analysing their impact on the effectiveness of the Organization. Given their heterogeneous character, it was to be expected that the recommendations would not all be dealt with in the same detail, but the information on the implementation of some of the most important was too brief for one to be able to determine the impact of the reforms. It would appear that some of the recommendations had not received the desired attention, in particular recommendations 47, 54 and 55 relating to personnel. It would be noted, for example, that the number of high-level posts occupied by nationals of

(Mr. Duhalt, Mexico)

developing countries had decreased since 1986. It was to be hoped that steps would be taken to remedy that situation.

11. It was appropriate that, at a time when the results of the reform process were being evaluated, the Secretary-General should recall that the enhancement of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations was not an end in itself but a means of enabling the Organization to attain its objectives. In paragraph 258 of his report, the Secretary-General stated that the process had largely achieved its purpose, in that the Organization's overall effectiveness had been enhanced. There was no doubt that several mechanisms and procedures had been improved. The reforms had allowed Member States and the Secretariat to be more aware of the way in which the United Nations spent its resources. In the Fifth Committee, the changed climate was reflected in the fact that all resolutions had been adopted by consensus. In that connection, his delegation wished to emphasize that that development, although welcome, could not be interpreted as a renunciation of the inalienable right of Member States to vote on draft decisions.

12. Given the absence of sufficiently detailed information, it was difficult to reach any decision on the cost-benefit ratio of the measures taken. The Secretary-General had indeed said that their implementation had not had a negative impact on programme delivery, but the figures provided showed that the delivery rate had declined since 1986. Given those contradictory indications, it was essential that the impact of the reforms on programme delivery should be followed closely so that the necessary corrective measures could be taken in time.

13. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, the reform process implied a constant review of the functioning of the Organization. The administrative reorganization measures should now be followed by measures to strengthen the economic and social sector, so that the Organization could be as active in that field as it was in the maintenance of peace and security. To that end, all Member States must demonstrate a greater will to co-operate. It was essential that they should respect the democratic principles of the Organization and, in particular, discharge their financial obligations in full and on time. His delegation would, for its part, continue to participate actively in any initiative aimed at modernizing the United Nations and consolidating multilateral relations.

14. Mr. McBARNETTE (Trinidad and Tobago) said that it was difficult to determine whether the tasks set by the Group of 18 had been successfully completed because its recommendations included general proposals as well as detailed administrative instructions and, in many cases, had not been predicated on research or scientific findings. The Secretary-General was right to consider that much had been done since 1986 and that what was now required was to consolidate what had been accomplished and move forward. However, the reforms initiated so far must be given time to work, particularly in the planning and budgetary area.

15. The Group of 18 had set the Secretary-General the target of reducing regular budget and high-level posts by 15 and 25 per cent respectively. Those targets had not been achieved, but it was important to recall that the Secretary-General had

(Mr. McBarnette, Trinidad and Tobago)

also been requested to avoid any negative impact on programmes or on the composition of the Secretariat. There was a functional relationship between the necessary level of staff resources and the volume of programmes and activities to be implemented; care must therefore be taken to see that the capability of the Organization was not impaired at a time when it was continually being requested to undertake new tasks. The Secretary-General stated that a negative impact on programmes and activities had on the whole been avoided, but that statement, although it might be true, was not conclusively proved in his analytical report, which indicated, for example, that a number of outputs had been eliminated. It also emerged from the report on the programme performance of the United Nations that programme delivery rates had declined from 82 per cent in 1984-1985 to 74 per cent in 1988-1989, although that was only a quantitative analysis and did not attempt to assess the quality and relevance of the outputs. Lastly, the increased use of extrabudgetary resources during the period under review had masked the negative effects of post reductions. He was not opposed to the use of extrabudgetary resources, but they should not be programmed in the same manner as regular budget resources, or their use might seriously disrupt the planning and budgetary process.

16. The Special Commission established to study the reform of the economic and social sectors had been unable to arrive at agreed conclusions and recommendations. It was essential that Member States and the Secretariat should bring that work to a conclusion. That would require a less piecemeal approach and a courageous re-examination of positions on the matter. A major achievement of the reform process was the light it had thrown on the willingness of Member States to work together with the Secretary-General; in-depth consultations should continue, thus giving concrete manifestation to the sovereign equality of all Member States.

17. Some progress had been made with regard to co-ordination. The joint meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and CPC were evolving into an extremely useful mechanism for fostering co-ordination within the system. The annual report of ACC would help to promote greater understanding of the potential of the United Nations. Effective co-ordination, however, required a "culture of co-ordination" and a locus of authority within the system responsible for that activity. The Secretary-General, as Chairman of ACC, and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should undertake that task. Evaluation was still not accepted as a management tool and was not utilized in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. Self-evaluation and in-depth evaluation should therefore be more extensively used, and the intergovernmental bodies should devote sufficient time to the substantive consideration of reports on such evaluations.

18. The United Nations must be allowed to consolidate its position in order to move confidently into the 1990s and beyond. Member States must allow the reforms already instituted to take root. Above all, the Organization must be supported with adequate financial resources for it to play the enhanced role requested by Member States.

19. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana), referring to recommendations 1 to 13 of the Group of 18, said he had noted with some concern that, instead of decreasing, the number of items on the Organizations's agenda and the number of resolutions adopted had increased, and that efforts to implement recommendation 8 on the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields had proved inconclusive. While it was true that the implementation of those recommendations rested primarily with Member States, the Secretariat had a not inconsiderable part to play, for example by advising Member States on the possibility of eliminating duplication in agenda items. With regard to recommendation 5, he pointed out that delays in implementing approved projects, specifically construction projects, was as much a reflection on efficiency as the excessive utilization of resources for a programme. With regard to recommendation 6, the Secretary-General's report indicated that the number of claims for delegation travel had decreased. Given the large number of empty seats at Committee meetings, there were grounds for wondering what were the real effects of the measures taken.

20. The failure of the initiatives taken to reform the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social fields could be attributed primarily to the diverging views of Member States. Recent developments in the international political climate gave grounds for hope that they would finally agree on the need to secure peace through development.

21. It was the will of the General Assembly, as expressed in resolution 41/213, that the implementation of the Group's recommendations 14 to 40 concerning the structure of the Secretariat should not have a negative impact on programme implementation. In paragraph 80 of his report, the Secretary-General stated that programmes had not, on the whole, been negatively affected by the reorganization of the Secretariat. Nevertheless, according to paragraph 79, the rate of implementation had declined during the biennium 1988-1989 as compared with the two previous bienniums, whereas the rate of termination of programmed outputs had risen to 15 per cent. According to the Secretary-General, the latter figure suggested that more attention had been given to redressing the deficiencies of the programming process. The fact remained that the level of activities had decreased even though the number of staff had remained about the same.

22. It emerged from paragraph 77 that, on the basis of a 15 per cent staff turnover rate, the 12 per cent reduction in the number of authorized posts - and not in the number of posts filled - had not had any significant impact on the number of staff of the Organization. It might therefore legitimately be asked whether recommendation 15 had really been implemented, particularly since the reduction in regular budget posts had been largely offset by a significant increase (+33 per cent) in the number of posts funded by extrabudgetary resources. His delegation welcomed the measures taken to restructure the units dealing with political affairs, but encouraged the Secretary-General to take additional steps to eliminate duplication, improve co-ordination, and thereby enhance the productivity of the departments concerned.

23. A more comprehensive approach should have been taken to the implementation of the recommendations on personnel, and particular care should have been taken not to

(Mr. Dankwa, Ghana)

jeopardize career development. It was regrettable that the Secretary-General had failed to indicate the impact of the implementation of recommendations 43 and 44 on the geographical composition of the Secretariat, since equitable geographical representation was one of the cardinal principles of the Organization's personnel policy. For the same reason, the implementation of recommendation 47 must be pursued with greater vigour, since the number of high-level posts occupied by nationals of developing countries remained insufficient.

24. His delegation regretted that the General Assembly had not yet been able to find a comprehensive solution to the problem of additional expenditures, including those deriving from inflation and currency fluctuation, and requested the Advisory Committee to redouble its efforts to devise the most appropriate mechanism. In conclusion, it recalled that payment by Member States of their contributions to the Organization's budget in full and on time was decisive in determining the level of efficiency of the Organization.

25. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said he was pleased to note that the process initiated in 1986 had attained its objectives in many areas. If the reform, which was essentially a continuing process, was to be pursued, Member States must provide the Organization with the necessary political and financial support. The remarkable improvement in the global political climate and the additional responsibilities entrusted to the United Nations should encourage all Member States to play their part in putting an end to the Organization's financial crisis.

26. With regard to the recommendations of the Group of 18 on personnel, his delegation noted with satisfaction that the proportion of women had increased, particularly at the higher levels. Further efforts must be made, however, to recruit more women from developing countries and, in general, to increase the number of nationals of those countries in senior-level posts. He was pleased to note that the Secretary-General stated that he had implemented recommendation 15 in a pragmatic manner, with flexibility, in order to avoid any negative impact on programmes, and that the programmes that were part of the programme budget for the current biennium would not be negatively affected by the post reduction (12 per cent) carried out between 1987 and 1989. Clarification from the Secretariat would be useful on that point, however, given the fact that the rate of implementation of programmes had decreased during the preceding biennium, as compared with the two previous bienniums, and that the Secretariat itself stated that "the capacity of the Organization to expand its programmes and produce new outputs, while retained, was, nevertheless, reduced" (para. 79). Any further initiative should aim to increase the capacity of the Organization to play a greater role in a changing world.

27. In the economic and social fields, the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18 had not been so easy on account of the divergent views of Member States. Despite some progress, much remained to be done. For instance, programming and co-ordination of activities must be improved, a proper balance must be maintained between operational activities funded by extrabudgetary resources and mandated programmes, and the interrelationship between research and policy analysis

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

and operational activities must be further studied. Reform in a sector that was so important for developing countries could not be dealt with in a piecemeal manner.

28. A welcome development was the confidence-building between the Member States and the Secretariat in the administrative and financial areas. The adoption without a vote of resolutions concerning those questions at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly had been encouraging. It was also to be hoped that the reform of the budgetary process would result in a better utilization of available resources.

29. Mr. OSELLA (Argentina) noted that not all the recommendations of the Group of 18 had been dealt with in the same manner and regretted that the report of the Secretary-General did not furnish a reply to the many questions that might be asked about the reasons why individual recommendations had not been implemented, or not fully implemented, about the difficulties encountered, the solutions envisaged, and so on.

30. Despite the reforms carried out and the efforts made by most Member States, the financial situation of the Organization remained precarious. His delegation recalled that every Member State was required by the Charter to participate in the financing of the approved budget and could not shirk that obligation under any pretext, especially not for political reasons. Despite a particularly difficult economic situation, Argentina, for its part, was sparing no effort to meet its commitments.

31. The work of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council and the Council's resolution 1988/77 were two important contributions to the process of reform of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sector. Progress had been made on such matters as the adoption of a biennial cycle by the subsidiary organs, the streamlining of the calendar of meetings and the elimination of duplication, but the work in that area was far from finished and efforts must be continued.

32. With regard to the recommendations of the Group of 18 on personnel, the Organization must adopt a clear and coherent personnel policy and display the necessary flexibility so as not to jeopardize programme implementation. It must recruit staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution.

33. The new budget process established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/213 enabled Member States to participate more actively in the formulation of the medium-term plan, the budget outline and the programme budget, and to reach a consensus, respecting the principle of the sovereign equality of all States in accordance with the Charter. In that connection, his delegation stressed that, while it favoured the adoption of resolutions by consensus, the practice did not represent any kind of obligation and Member States were always entitled to request that a decision should be put to a vote.

(Mr. Osella, Argentina)

34. As the Secretary-General had remarked, the achievements of the reform begun in 1986 must now be consolidated. He hoped that the recent successes in the political domain would have an impact in the economic and social sphere. The great merit of the Group of 18 would have been to instil an awareness, not only in Member States, but also in the Secretariat, of the need to make effective use of resources. That said, it should not be forgotten that the quest for efficiency did not necessarily mean the elimination of programmes, reductions in staffing tables or budgetary restrictions. Being efficient meant attaining established objectives, namely, in the case of the Organization, implementing approved programmes and outputs.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/45/6, A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/204, A/45/218 and Corr.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/45/279 and A/45/617; A/C.5/45/CRP.1)

35. Mr. FOX (United States of America) said that his delegation urged adoption by the General Assembly of the Advisory Committee's recommendations as contained in its report (A/45/617). In particular, he agreed with the Advisory Committee that the time had come to address seriously the issue of whether the medium-term plan, in its current form, fulfilled the criteria set out in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, and that much remained to be done if the medium-term plan was to be of real use to Member States and the Secretariat. His delegation shared the belief of the Secretary-General that the Organization's objectives for the next six years and into the new century must reflect the recent positive international developments. Implementation of the objectives established by the Secretary-General would go a long way towards establishing the world community envisaged almost half a century earlier with the adoption of the Charter.

36. Nevertheless the medium-term plan contained a number of activities which the United States did not support. His delegation had entered reservations on those activities and they were recorded in the CPC report.

37. The Secretary-General emphasized the need to improve operations and procedures to maximize the use of the resources made available to the system. In that connection, the renewed commitment to effective co-ordination within the system at the recent joint meetings of CPC and ACC was encouraging. There was reason to hope that the Organization would be able to achieve positive results in the areas in which it had responsibility, but the enormity and complexity of the tasks facing the United Nations should not be underestimated.

38. His delegation had noted some positive changes in the programme of work of the Organization. Nevertheless, too large a proportion of United Nations resources continued to be allocated to activities which had not produced significant results in the past. Many programmes, particularly in the economic and social sectors, continued to stress the publication of technical studies and the servicing of meetings. Yet those activities had proved to be ineffective means of providing Member States with the assistance they needed to resolve critical problems. In the view of his delegation, challenging work assignments would do more to improve conditions of service than a pay increase.

(Mr. Fox, United States)

39. The medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 reflected important improvements in the programme planning process. The consolidation of related activities had made it possible to reduce the number of subprogrammes. Priorities had been established in a number of areas, although it would have been more meaningful if low as well as high priority subprogrammes had been identified.

40. Further change was required for the plan to serve as a workable tool for directing the Organization's work. A document of such importance should be readily usable by Member States and the Secretariat. Yet the proposed medium-term plan numbered some 650 pages. Taking into account the revisions which would subsequently be proposed by the Secretary-General during the period covered by the plan and the modifications recommended by CPC, approximately 1,000 pages could be anticipated at the end of the six-year cycle. That was why his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the plan must be simplified and shortened and that the verbosity, repetitiveness and length of the current submission undermined its usefulness. In the view of his delegation, the plan should not exceed 50 to 100 pages in length, which would encourage more focused and meaningful debate in the relevant intergovernmental organs. The current format of the plan encouraged delegations to address its narrower, technical elements such as legislative mandates or the specific activities to be carried out under each programme. In that connection, ACABQ correctly noted that the plan was supposed to serve as the framework for the formulation of the programme budgets and that the priorities approved in the plan were supposed to guide the allocation of resources. His delegation shared the conclusion of the Advisory Committee that the extent to which the plan served those purposes was unclear and needed to be addressed by the Secretary-General and Member States.

41. Turning to the report on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/45/218 and Add.1), he said that such documents did not provide a useful analysis or a measure of the Organization's accomplishments during the preceding biennium. Indeed, the information produced could be misleading, as indicated quite candidly in the report itself. He therefore questioned the desirability of continuing a reporting mechanism which did not adequately serve the needs of Member States and the Secretariat. Pending the approval of a new methodology, his delegation concurred with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that issuance of further programme performance reports should be suspended.

42. Finally, concerning the application of evaluation findings in programme design and delivery and policy directives, the Secretariat was to be commended for providing an unusually candid analysis of the problems encountered in the application of evaluation findings (A/45/204). The obvious lack of progress in implementing a comprehensive and integrated system for improving the quality and utility of the Organization's activities was troubling. The report indicated that evaluation had still not been completely accepted as a management tool and that for the most part it had still not been systematically and routinely integrated into the decision-making and management process. It was unfortunate that the ultimate usefulness of the report was diminished by the brief and ill-defined recommendations it contained. Indeed, far-reaching improvements in the design and implementation of programmes were needed.

43. Mr. ZVONKO (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the medium-term plan was an important instrument for the establishment of programme priorities and, once approved, constituted an essential policy document. It must therefore satisfy the strictest requirements as to substance and form.

44. With regard to form, while the improvement in the plan's structure was welcome, it must still be acknowledged, as ACABQ did, that the length and density of the document undermined its usefulness. Hence, as CPC noted, the need to simplify and edit the text, to define the objectives of the subprogrammes more clearly, to establish an order of priority for all the programmes, and to give a preliminary assessment of the resources needed.

45. As to substance, the introduction to the medium-term plan gave an objective account of the current international situation and a clear description of the tasks awaiting the United Nations. A new era of peace was opening up for mankind which made it possible to view international relations from the standpoint prevailing at the time of the founding of the United Nations. His delegation was glad to note that the Organization's priorities for the next five years would be based on the ideals set out in the Charter and that cardinal importance would be attached to all measures for the establishment and maintenance of peace.

46. The Secretary-General rightly stressed that the United Nations must play a leading role in the development of international law. In the economic and social fields the world situation was such that the international community really must endeavour as its first priority to fight against poverty, hunger and disease and for human rights and dignity. The United Nations must make a contribution to the balanced economic development of all countries. It was of course also essential to step up the battle against drug abuse.

47. Byelorussia, more than any other country, had experienced the disastrous reality of the serious threat which environmental degradation posed for the planet. In addition to pollution, environmental accidents such as the Chernobyl disaster placed mankind at serious risk. The already incalculable effects of that disaster might persist for centuries in Byelorussia unless emergency measures were taken to counteract them. It must therefore be recognized not only that environmental degradation constituted a danger but also that international co-operation in environmental protection was a special responsibility of the highest importance for the United Nations. In his delegation's opinion, it was very important for the General Assembly to adopt at the present session a special resolution reflecting the global impact of the Chernobyl accident and to formulate concrete measures for concerted action by the United Nations, IAEA and other international organizations in order to soften that impact.

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (continued)

Major programme I. Maintenance of peace and security, disarmament and decolonization

48. Mr. ABRASZEWSKY (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) introduced the conclusions and recommendations of CPC concerning each of the eight

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programmes in major programme I as set out in its report (A/45/16 (Part I)). In each case the conclusions and recommendations were preceded by a summary of the discussion in CPC.

49. Mr. WILKINSON (United States of America) said that his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the Organization must enhance its capacity for analysis and action in cases of conflict, while recognizing that recourse to the Secretary-General's good offices was not always useful or appropriate. The activities of programme 5 (Question of Palestine) were similar to those undertaken by the Organization in the past and, in his delegation's opinion, they were not likely to promote a peaceful settlement of the situation in the Middle East. The United States did not support the programme but would not oppose its adoption by consensus.

50. Where disarmament was concerned, accession to the non-proliferation treaties was a vital necessity and must be matched by a reduction of conventional weapons. The developing countries must also reduce their armaments. His delegation did not accept the linking of disarmament to development.

51. Mr. OSELLA (Argentina) asked how the changes recommended by CPC would be incorporated in the medium-term plan.

52. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the changes would be made in the final document, which would also take into account the decisions of the Fifth Committee. The Fifth Committee would adopt the plan after the consideration of the relevant parts by the other Main Committees.

53. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) suggested that before examining the programmes the Committee should await the comments which the other Main Committees might make on them.

54. The CHAIRMAN said that it would be better to begin the consideration of the programmes immediately and to consider at a later stage and all together the comments made by the other Main Committees.

AGENDA ITEM 118: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

Revised estimates under sections 3, 13, 27 and 31 and income section 1 (A/C.5/45/2 and A/45/7/Add.2)

55. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) summarized the views and recommendations of the Advisory Committee in its report (A/45/7/Add.2) on the revised estimates under sections 3, 13, 27, and 31 and income section 1 (A/C.5/45/2). He recalled that at its forty-fourth session the General Assembly had approved the Secretary-General's provisional estimates for the section on Namibia, pending the presentation of revised estimates taking into account the effects of Namibian independence. At its resumed forty-fourth session, the Assembly had adopted resolution 44/243 A in which it decided, among other

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things, to dissolve the Council for Namibia and to continue the implementation of certain activities. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General when submitting his revised estimates to make proposals for the redeployment of staff engaged in activities relating to Namibia. The Secretary-General had submitted proposals to that end in his report (A/C.5/45/2).

56. Regarding the United Nations Council for Namibia, the Advisory Committee recommended that the estimate of $241,800 for organizing a seminar on programme planning for the national reconstruction and development of Namibia should be deleted, given that the matter had already been discussed at the Donor Pledging Conference on Namibia in June 1990. However, should the Government of Namibia express interest in holding the seminar, the Secretary-General should indicate the related requirements in his performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991.

57. In the case of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, the most important element was the redeployment of personnel and the elimination of posts. Most of the Office's 61 posts had already been vacated. The Advisory Committee felt that, given the number of new activities under way, the 28 staff members still awaiting a new posting could be redeployed to other Secretariat units before January 1991. The Committee therefore recommended that the amount of $1,634,900 requested for salary and common staff costs for those staff members should not be included in the budget. With regard to the proposed comprehensive national census for Namibia, the Advisory Committee believed that the body best qualified to carry it out was UNFPA.

58. The Advisory Committee noted that, of the amount of $3 million provisionally appropriated for United Nations grants for the period 1990-1991, $1.5 million had already been credited to the United Nations Fund for Namibia. The Secretary-General proposed using the remaining $1.4 million to meet possible residual obligations of the Institute for Namibia. The Advisory Committee, concerned over the apparent lack of proper financial control and management of the Institute, thought that the proposal might jeopardize the programme of activities to be carried out between 1990 and 1994. The Secretary-General had informed the Committee that he would make further efforts to obtain additional voluntary contributions so as to prevent that from occurring.

59. Regarding the staff of the Transitional Unit for Namibia which it was proposed to establish, the Advisory Committee did not think that the Unit's work-load justified the number of staff proposed and therefore recommended the approval of a smaller unit, consisting of one P-5 and two General Service posts.

60. For the reasons given in paragraphs 16 and 17 of its report, the Advisory Committee was not in a position to approve the proposal to transfer a P-4 post to the Unit for Special Emergency programmes of the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship.

61. The Committee also regretted that it could not accept the new posts and the proposed reclassification of posts in the Centre Against Apartheid. On the other

hand, it did approve the Secretary-General's estimate for establishing an information centre at Windhoek.

62. Since the review of working conditions at Addis Ababa had shown that the Economic Commission for Africa lagged far behind the other regional commissions in the use of computer technology, the Advisory Committee accepted the estimate of $2,898,000, including $1,716,500 from the regular budget, requested by the Secretary-General to finance the proposed modernization project.

63. In all, the Advisory Committee's recommendations would result in a total decrease of $10,632,900 (as against $8,093,200 proposed by the Secretary-General), most of it resulting from the deletion of the estimated salary and common staff costs for the 28 officials of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia awaiting redeployment.

64. Mr. ABRASZEWSKY (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) recapitulated the views of CPC on the revised estimates, which were set out in paragraphs 41 to 45 of its report (A/45/16 (Part II)). CPC had noted with regret that the report of the Secretary-General on the subject had not been available for its consideration. It had urged the Secretary-General to ensure that such a situation did not occur again and had recommended that the report should be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session for consideration and appropriate action. During the consideration of the item (paras. 42 to 44 of the report) a number of delegations had made informal preliminary comments on the Secretary-General's proposals, while others had stated that, since the document was not available in all languages, they were unable to comment on the item.

65. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation supported the ACABQ recommendations concerning the revised estimates under sections 3C, 3B and 3D and 27 of the programme budget, for it believed that the submission of those estimates was relevant and perfectly in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/243.

66. With regard to section 13, however, his delegation had difficulty in understanding why the revised estimates had been submitted at the same time as the ones relating to Namibia. That was no doubt due in part to the fact that the adoption of resolution 682 (XXV) of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa concerning improvement of the Commission's technical facilities had coincided with the gradual reduction of activities relating to Namibia. It was nevertheless wrong to offset additional appropriations under one section by economies in another. His delegation therefore proposed that a separate decision should be taken on section 13. After recalling that the Economic and Social Council had taken note of ECA resolution 682 (XXV) and had recognized the need for emergency action to establish appropriate technology and management standards in order to enhance the functioning of ECA, the Committee might recommend to the General Assembly that it should approve the proposed automation project and authorize an additional appropriation of $1,716,500 for the biennium 1990-1991. The adoption of that proposal would be consistent with the procedure set out in paragraph 10 of annex I of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

67. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda), referring to paragraph 86 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/45/2) and to paragraph 25 of the ACABQ report (A/45/7/Add.2), said that the Committee's work would be made easier if it had information about the current practice in the United Nations with regard to the opening of information centres and the arrangements made in that respect in the agreement between the United Nations and the Namibian Government.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.